

# Heritage

Education: Past, Present & Future

## The Future's So Bright



### Yankton's RTEC Celebrates 10 Years of Training The Future

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The Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC) in Yankton reached a milestone this year. The non-profit operation, meant to help train skilled workers in the Yankton, is celebrating its 10th year in service.

General Manager Josh Svatos said the organization came out of necessity.

"RTEC is a 501(c)3 non-profit skilled training facility," he said. "It was formed when several manufacturing facilities left the community for reasons that were beyond anybody's control. A group of business professionals got together and created this organization because they felt there was a need for skills training and to help fill workforce voids as it relates to manufacturing, healthcare and other skilled trades."



Svatos

Svatos said RTEC has grown from there. "It's kind of evolved into what we are today, and that is a technical training facility," he said. "We house a Mitchell Technical Institute industrial maintenance technology program, an engineering technology associates degree from Black Hills State University, our welding program and, new this fall, we've started some career technical education (CTE) classes with area high schools as part of the CTE grant Yankton High School received."

Svatos said organization sees numbers fluctuate due to the non-traditional structure of classes.

"We fluctuate (because) a lot of our classes are customized," he said. "We're not on a true semester schedule, so at any given time in a welding class, we can have anywhere from 12 to 16 students. Mitchell Tech ... has eight students and Black Hills State has eight students in various stages as well."

He said the reception for the facility and its programs has been positive.

"We've had great support from the community," he said. "When you look at what is needed in the community — we're very heavy on manufacturing and we're very heavy on healthcare. So when you're looking at skilled trades, we've been received very favorably just based on the fact we're here to help fill that void to train people for those skilled jobs."

Svatos said an organization like RTEC is critical to a city like Yankton and the general area.

"It's an arm of economic development and workforce development," he said. "At the end of the day, if we don't have people earning a decent wage, reinvesting that money into the community, bringing in their families to live in the community, coming in from the outside to work these skilled jobs and spend money in the community, you take away a pretty big void out of the region and Yankton."

He added the non-profit plans to continue to expand the workforce.

"The goal for the future is to continue to do what we do — a dedicated mission to home grow our workforce through cutting-edge career and technical education. (We want to) maintain the workforce that we currently have,

Kelly Frazee of Yankton works on her steel-cutting skills while taking a welding class at the Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC) in Yankton. The facility is celebrating 10 years of service to the community and area, and is still helping local manufacturers meet their employee demands — while helping potential employees learn new skills or sharpen their current talents.

KELLY HERTZ/P&D